

Children's Vision Massachusetts Story Bank

Prepared by Brianne Bostian, MPH Candidate, Boston University School of Public Health



At two years old, when Sophia was just learning to talk, she pointed to her eye and told her mother, “eye broken.” Despite the fact that most children with vision problems are unaware of what normal sight is Sophia’s story is remarkable in that she recognized that she had a problem with her vision, and reported it to her mother. Her mom took her to Dr. Quinn, a pediatric optometrist, who diagnosed her with farsightedness and astigmatism in both eyes and prescribed eyeglasses. “Sophia could have developed amblyopia, a loss of vision that is difficult to treat as the child grows older. But with glasses, her vision has been able to develop normally. She loves her glasses now.”

Correcting vision in young children can help them succeed academically and socially. If children are having difficulty seeing, they are not able to access and interact with their environments in the same way that children with normal sight do. This puts them at a disadvantage. Dr. Quinn believes that understanding that visual health can affect a child’s performance in school, and all other areas of their lives, is critical. “Having access to eye care is extremely important. Not only do we need to provide access to comprehensive eye exams for all children, but also access to eyeglasses, contacts, or whatever the child needs so that their problem can be treated in a timely and effective manner,” says Dr. Quinn. “I see a lot of kids who come to the doctor because their insurance will cover the visit, but it takes a long time for them to get glasses. And then if glasses break, replacing them can take more time, delaying treatment further. There are many areas of children’s vision care that need improvement.”

Dr. Quinn emphasizes that when providers, parents, and teachers are on the same page regarding detection and treatment of vision problems, children are more likely to succeed. “A lot of time parents think it is okay for kids to not wear their glasses since they are little. They might not understand what the problem is. Sophia was fortunate because her mom was able to support her in getting and wearing her glasses,” says Dr. Quinn. Sophia has a younger sister, Mia. Since Mia did not complain, her mom was not worried about her vision. Dr. Quinn explained that vision issues can be genetic and most times vision problems go unreported by the child. Following a comprehensive eye exam, Mia wears glasses as well. Just like her older sister.

Nicole Quinn, O.D., F.A.A.O., Associate Professor, New England College of Optometry, provides eye care in the Department of Ophthalmology and Strabismus at Tuft Medical Center. Her clinical expertise is in pediatric optometry and binocular vision.



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